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February 11, 2008

Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street, SW
Washington, DC 20423

Attn: Phillis Johnson-Ball
Environmental Filing
STB Finance Docket #35087

Surface Transportation Board
CN-EJ&E EIS - FD-35087

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Dear Ms. Johnson-Ball:

As 12 year residents of Barrington, we are deeply concerned about the impact CN's proposed acquisition of the EJ&E line will have on the quality of life, safety of children and other residents, local businesses, and property values.

The EJ&E crossings in Barrington may differ from other crossings on the line. The line goes through the heart of town, and will simultaneously block north-south and east-west auto traffic as well as the METRA tracks. There are already 65 trains (nearly all commuter) running through town every weekday. The road blockage from commuter trains is insignificant when compared to the blockage caused by freight traffic. Thousands of children attend schools within walking distance of the tracks, and cross those tracks on foot, in busses, or in cars every day. With commuter and freight trains criss-crossing in the downtown area, emergency response times may easily become woefully inadequate.

Consider the 15-20 trains, with an average length of 9000 feet, crossing through this town on a daily basis (and certainly CN hopes for success with this route, which would increase the number of trains, the length, or both). These trains will block three major arterial crossings at once. Assuming an average speed of 30mph, each train will block each of these roads for approximately 3½ minutes – or a total of 70 minutes per day. Road blockage will cause, among other things:

- Congested roadways
- Pollution (from the trains AND the motor vehicles)
- Inability of emergency vehicles to cross tracks
- Inability of school busses to get children to and from school on a timely basis (there are over 400 school bus crossings in Barrington on school days)
- Significant increased exposure to hazardous materials

Of course, the impact of those blockages will be worse. The estimated 3½ minutes per train does not take into account the time the gate blocks the street before and after the train passes. In addition, it's likely that many of the trains will be traveling at a lower speed as a result of stopping for a METRA train or other reasons.

Fortunately for us our children have graduated, but we fear for the safety of all the school children that walk, drive, or are bussed across the tracks every day. Even crossing the streets will become more dangerous as frustrated drivers crawl through town.

I lived in Glenview when an underpass was built on Lake Street, just east of Pfingsten. As I recall, it was a 2-or-more year nightmare of a construction project, but now both rail and vehicular traffic move seamlessly through the area. Unfortunately, Barrington does not have the room for similar underpasses to be built (although when the downtown area turns into a ghost town as businesses flee the area, there may eventually be enough room for similar underpasses here – too bad what's left of the tax base won't be able to support the cost).

The only alternative to get train traffic through the area without creating a huge detrimental impact would be to put it underground (a freight train subway) – but I'm unclear where the underground would start or stop – and the cost of the subway approach would likely exceed CN's total budget for infrastructure improvements along the line.

Although the STB may not be concerned with the impact on property values, the added congestion will make the downtown Barrington area a well known place to avoid for anyone not interested in traffic jams. Downtown businesses will have an even more difficult time remaining competitive; many will be forced to close their doors. This will result in an increased property tax burden on local residential property. Increased property taxes, increased travel times, increased noise, increased congestion, and safety concerns will have a ripple effect on property values in this town that will make the current real estate market pale by comparison.

For these reasons, we implore you to REJECT CN's application for the acquisition of the EJ&E line.

Sincerely,

 
Anne E. and Richard J. Salter